

May 2014

**Special points of interest in this issue:**

- Join our School Psychology Student Association (SPSA)!
- 100% internship placement rate!
- Welcome new students!
- Dr. Phil Lazarus: School Psych Rap Artist?!

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### SPSA's Successful Year!

By: Tiffany Griffin

The School Psychology Student Association (SPSA) has accomplished many things this 2013-2014 school year. SPSA's executive board: Tiffany Griffin (President), Sean Pascale (Vice President), Diana Arce (Secretary), Glanel Reyes (Treasurer), and Nicole Diaz (Special Events Chair) have all worked very hard to make this year very successful for SPSA.

The Fall year began with an orientation for our new incoming students. SPSA hosted a meet and greet for all students, current and new, to mingle, eat, and unwind. The event was held at Chili's and students were able to develop relationships, ask questions and garner invaluable insights.



In Fall, SPSA, was awarded funding to attend the Florida Association of School Psychologists Annual Conference in Orlando, FL. This funding covered the student's accommodation expenses. Six FIU students attend this conference where they were able to attend lectures and presentations on upcoming Florida Initiatives and Research in School Psychology. In addition, they were able to attend awards banquets and meet and develop relationships with other students and professionals in the field. Two students from FIU were nominated for outstanding student awards.



In addition, during the Fall semester SPSA in collaboration with Chi Sigma Iota (Counseling Student Organization) arranged a College wide toy drive for Beneath the Tress Foundation, a non-profit agency that builds and outfits schools in Nicaragua. FIU's college of education faculty, staff, and students all donated toys for children attending these schools. Over 300 items were donated to help this great cause.

Throughout the fall semester, School Psychology students attended basketball games, trainings, and meetings together. SPSA hosted movie night with the movie "Who cares about Kelsey" and food. SPSA gives students an opportunity to develop relationships outside the classroom and have some fun. *(Continued on page 2)*



## SPSA's successful year!

*(Continued from page 1)*

In the Spring 2014 SPSA applied for additional funding to attend the National Association of School Psychologists Annual Conference in Washington D.C. Funding covered students hotel accommodations. Three students attended the conference and were able to attend a weeks' worth of meetings, gala's, student outings, and presentations/lectures on up and coming research and testing. Two students presented their own research at the NASP conference.

We also hosted the Movie "Bully," finally had T-shirts made, and had every student in our upcoming graduating class (Class of 2015) receive an internship. It was a very successful semester for SPSA and the FIU School Psychology Program.

We ended the Spring semester with our Annual Graduation Celebration Banquet. Every year SPSA organizes and hosts a graduation celebration for our graduating interns. During this banquet, we honor those students who are graduating, another successful year of FIU's school psychology program, and honor one outstanding student with the Patty del Valle Humanitarian Award. This year's winner was Martha Carias. Graduating interns were given gifts, everyone eats, and we relax and enjoy each other's company. Dr. Lazarus also celebrated the interns' success with a School Psychology Rap song, "Make me Gifted"!

Listen to Dr. Lazarus' rap song, "Make me Gifted" using the link below:

[http://www.smule.com/p/179099479\\_39662024](http://www.smule.com/p/179099479_39662024)



Congratulations to the new Executive Committee Chairs for 2014-2015!

**President:** Nathaly Ossa (nossa001@fiu.edu)

**Vice President:** Lindsay Piontkowski (lpion001@fiu.edu)

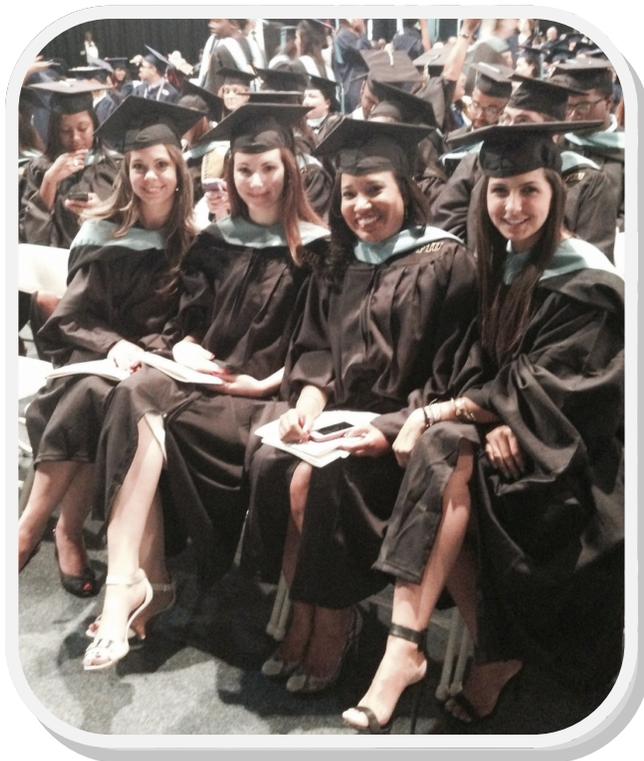
**Secretary:** Diana Arce (dmore002@fiu.edu)

**Faculty Advisor:** Phil Lazarus (philaz1@aol.com)

We have open positions available for: **Community Service, Special Projects, Treasurer, Social!**



## Graduation Spring 2014



**Congratulations to our graduates!**

Martha Carias, Ed.S.

Katherine Fajardo, Ed.S.

Alexandra Perez, Ed.S

Maria Rivas, Ed.S.



## Welcome New Students! (cont.)

We are pleased to welcome our new students who will be joining us this Summer/Fall 2014!



My name is **Alyssa Aguiar**. I am 22 years old and graduated, last May, with my Bachelors in Psychology from Florida Atlantic University. I am really looking forward to starting the School Psychology program at FIU and to be a part of such a great program. I currently work at an elementary school with the ESE department and working here has really opened my eyes to the world of School Psychology. I hope to one day become a school psychologist and have my own practice.

Hello! I am **Jennifer Gonzalez** and I graduated this past Spring 2014 from FIU with a bachelors in psychology in addition to a minor in education. For the past two years I have interned as a behavior therapist and will soon finish my certification as an assistant Behavior Analyst. I was born in Cuba and came at 8 years of age; therefore, I speak fluent Spanish as well as English. I look forward to seeing what is in store in the years ahead as I embark on this journey in school psychology."



Hi all! My name is **Laynie Burns** and I'm incredibly excited to begin the School Psychology program. I've been an elementary school teacher (Mrs. Burns to them!) in Broward County for 11 years, and have two young boys of my own. I'm hoping to mesh alllllll I've learned in the classroom with my own personal interest in psychology to embark on the next phase of my career.

Fun Fact: I have an undergraduate degree from Florida State University in Public Relations, where I spent time interviewing athletes, writing articles, and working/interning in press boxes during game days for the FSU Sports Information department.

## Welcome New Students! (cont.)

Hello, my name is **Nahomie Saint Pierre**. I graduated from Florida State University in 2011 with a bachelor degree in family and child sciences with a minor in psychology. I am interested in studying social/behavior problems among preschoolers and elementary age children. I hope to gain research experience while completing my degree at Florida International University. I also want to enhance my skills in helping and working with children and their families. A fun fact about myself: I have never traveled outside the United States but I will be going to the Bahamas in August 2014.



Hi my name is **May Nasser**. I graduated from Florida Atlantic University with my Bachelor's in Psychology and minor in Business law. I currently work as a preschool teacher and have been working with children for five years. I really enjoy working with children and I'm looking forward to continuing to pursue my passion through the school psychology program.

Fun Fact: I have been playing lacrosse for seven years and also was a lacrosse coach for two years.

I'm **Paulette Martinez**, but I prefer Paulie. I have a B.S. in child psychology from University of North Florida and a master's in early childhood education from FIU. I'm thrilled to be joining the school psychology team at FIU, and I look forward to helping parents and teacher work together to provide the best environment for each child. I'm interested in applied research, particularly on early language development and overall academic success. I've worked with low-income families through Head Start, given individual behavior therapy to children with autism, and currently substitute teach in Miami-Dade. I love sports, riding my bike, traveling, and spending time with my family and dog. As a Miami native, I also love the beach and fishing. I look forward to meeting my new classmates and getting some great experiences in this field.

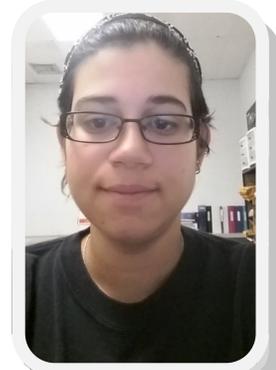


## Welcome New Students! (cont.)



My name is **Gemma Rosa**, and I graduated from Florida International University in 2011 with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. Since graduation, I have been working in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis, which has allowed me to witness first-hand how the right motivation and nurturing environment could enable a child to thrive. My experience has led me to pursue a career that specializes in helping students to meet their full potential. I am excited to begin the School Psychology program here at FIU, and I know that with the tools and knowledge that I will obtain from the program, I can accomplish my goals and become a positive contributor to the field of School Psychology and to the community.

Hello my name is **Melissa Velar** I am 23 years old. I am a mother of 2. I received my B.A in Behavioral Science at Barry University and am very excited about where School Psychology will be taking me!



My name is **Mailin Delgado** and I am 27 years old. I graduated from Florida International University with a Bachelors degree in Psychology, and a Masters degree in Mental Health Counseling. I decided to pursue a degree in School Psychology because through my internship experience, I learned that I love working with children and I enjoy doing testing. I am currently married, and I have two doggies that I love dearly. My favorite thing to do is travel; I feel that traveling exposes me to different cultures and experiences that are unique and worthwhile. When I am not traveling, I love to spend time with my family and friends, and I enjoy planning get-togethers and parties. Overall I try to live my life by the quote "Carpe Diem, Seize the Day".

## Welcome New Students! (cont.)



**Yesenia Joyas**

I graduated from Florida International University in 2011 with my BA in Psychology. I am a Miami native with a Nicaraguan background. I currently work at a private learning center that focuses on intensive reading remediation. We see lots of children with learning exceptionalities including dyslexia, ADHD, and ASD. I am very excited to continue to learn more about this population, as well as typically developing children and adolescents, through the School Psychology program. I have a passion for education and for helping children succeed academically, and am also interested in supporting education in third-world countries through fundraising and service trips.

**Not Pictured:** Melissa Gonzalez, Victoria Hightower, Jessica Rothman

## Words of Wisdom

Everyone can agree that graduate school is a whole different ballpark compared to undergraduate classes. Here are a few tips from our current students on how to succeed in the School Psychology Program!

“Manage your time wisely. Our program requires time outside of the classroom. You will be working with children on your own time administering assessments as well as implementing interventions. I would also strongly suggest that every student seek out a child to work with throughout the program. It will help you out in the long run. Overall, make the best of this experience!” -**Nathaly O.**

“The key is to have your goal set. You want this, you want to be a school psychologist... It won't always be easy and it will definitely be a lot of work. When is getting to be a little too much just breathe, is OK to feel scared, anxious, tired and frustrated. The key is to set your eyes on the prize- graduation. Welcome to School Psychology and make sure to join SPSA!” -**Diana A.**

“I would say that time management is definitely key. I found it helpful to plan ahead, be aware of due dates, and never underestimate how long it can take you to complete an assignment :) I also found it helpful to talk to my peers, in or out of my cohort, when I had a question or wanted to learn more about the program later on. Overall, from my experience and like most things in life, once you get into the rhythm it becomes a bit easier as you go along.”

-**Annela C.**

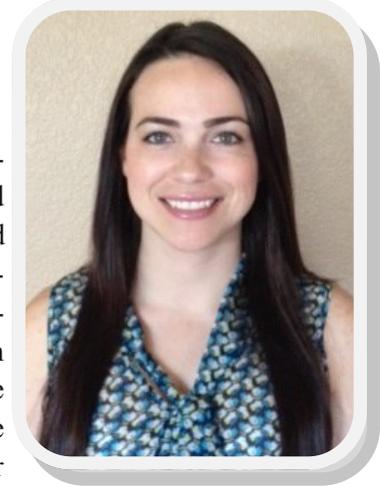
“**Keep up with the readings** by doing so every day, seems like advice in and of itself, we should always keep in mind why we chose this field. Was it to help the children? By **remembering why we are interesting in the field** in the first place, we can continue to use that motivation to guide our study habits...If possible, get involved early in an area that interests you by volunteering or working in the school system. For example, if you're interested in Autism or ADHD, FIU has summer camps where you can gain experience.”

-**Silvana N.**

## Alumni Spotlight

**Rita Diaz, Ed.S. ('13)**  
**Bilingual School Psychologist**  
**Hanford Elementary School District, Hanford, CA**

I am a first year School Psychologist in a small district in the Central Valley city of Hanford California. There are eleven schools in the district and about 5,300 students enrolled total. I serve two schools that are K-6<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade class at the Community Day School (which is an alternative placement). Assessment is about 60% of my job. We still use the discrepancy model here in order to discern a learning disability. Our Autism and Emotional Disturbed (EBD) assessments look VERY different than the ones we are used to doing in Florida. We are trained on and give the ADOS-II (which is pretty neat) and we don't use projective techniques for EBD assessments. Outside of assessments, some of my daily or weekly functions as a school psychologist include: providing guidance and counseling to students with IEPs, running social skills groups with high priority students on our campus, creating and helping implement behavior intervention plans as well as collecting documentation and data, and creating achievable behavior goals for students on their IEPs, just to name a few. My first year has been a huge learning curve, but it's been an incredible and exciting journey. If I could give any new students a piece of advice, it would be to not take any class you take in your graduate career for granted. Although you may think some of the courses you are taking now you will not need, believe me... you may find yourself taking out your Research Methods notes to help you develop a systematic behavior intervention!



## Mental Health Awareness Month!

**By: Andy Pham**

As school psychology professionals, one of our many roles is to provide positive mental health services to the children we serve in schools. Positive mental health is not simply the absence of mental illness, but also the promotion of resilience. School psychologists are trained to link mental health to learning and behavior in terms of prevention, intervention and outcomes evaluation. As evidence-based practitioners, we also need to provide a continuum of mental health services for children. Collaboration between school-based and community service providers and families is critical, particularly when working with students who require intensive support.

Because is May is Mental Health Awareness Month, we want school professionals to highlight the important of positive well-being of not only children and families, but also our own well-being too. If we are not careful in taking good psychological care of ourselves, then this will adversely affect the services we provide. Being a school psychologist can be a very stressful and demanding job, but we all have a common goal that allows us to make sure that we emphasize mental health in our school systems. I encourage everyone to check out the link below regarding resources for Mental Health Awareness Month provided by NASP:

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/mentalhealth/mental-health-awareness-month.aspx>

# Accomplishments and Announcements

## Publications!

Congratulations to Annela Costa and Dr. Martha Pelaez who recently published a peer-reviewed article in *Behavioral Development Bulletin*! Click below for the article!

[Costa, A., & Pelaez, M. \(2014\). Implementing intensive tact instruction to increase frequency of spontaneous mands and tacts in typically developing children. \*Behavioral Development Bulletin\*, 19\(1\), 19-24.](#)



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## Internships!

Congratulations to everyone who received an internship for the 2014-2015 school year!

### Off to Internship!

- Tara Barron – Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- Evelyn Castillo – Miami Dade County Public Schools
- Nicole Diaz – Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- Tiffany Griffin – Broward County Public Schools
- Sheree Hazel – Palm Beach School District
- Sean Pascale – Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- Ingrid Pujol – Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- Glanel Reyes – Martin County School District
- Alexandra Riviere – Miami-Dade County Public Schools

## Call for Proposals!

**The NASP 2015 Annual Convention Call for Presentation Proposals is Open!**

**The Deadline for Proposal Submission is Wednesday, June 11, 2014!!**

**If you are interested in submitting a proposal, more information can be found here: <http://www.nasponline.org/conventions/2015/call-for-presentations.aspx>**

**The conference will be held on February 17-20, 2015, in Orlando, FL!**

ALL students are encouraged to become student NASP members in order to receive discounts on textbooks, student registration costs for conferences, as well as access to a wealth of professional resources and publications, including *School Psychology Review* and the *Communique!*

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**BUY FIU SCHOOL  
PSYCHOLOGY T-SHIRTS!**

**Only \$10 each!**

**Please notify any of the executive board officers on how to get on your very own VERY fashionable t-shirt!**